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All letters to be addressed to the Editor, 9, Upper Sackville street. Contributors of £1 per annum will be furnished with six copies, any of which will be forwarded, as directed, to nominees of the subscriber.

In consequence of several persons having returned copies of the CATHOLIC LAYMAN, which had been already paid for by friends, under the apprehension that they might be called on hereafter in person to pay for them, we beg to call their attention to the following announcement—viz., that any one receiving any number of this journal which has not been ordered by himself, will not be charged for it, and may assume that it has been paid for by a subscriber.

## The Catholic Layman.

DUBLIN, MAY 16, 1856.

THE tendency of the times may sometimes be traced, in matters of religion as well as in things of less importance, by watching the course of events in themselves insignificant, but which, as indicative of popular taste and feeling, attain an importance to which otherwise they are but little entitled. Such things are of still greater moment when those who should be the spiritual leaders of the people, the bishops and priesthood, take an active part in them, and try to guide the popular sentiment in that particular direction.

We some months ago made some observations upon a recent work by the Roman Catholic Primate of Ireland, the Most Rev. Dr. Dixon, entitled, "the Blessed Cornelius," in which he did all in his power to resuscitate the almost extinct love of bones and other relics of saints in Ireland; and expressed in feeling terms his deep grief that the saints of our own dear country, who went to enlighten the Continent by their preaching, should have "left their bones there as a *precious inheritance*." Dr. Dixon did more; for by re-importing a considerable relic of a *supposed* predecessor—viz., a thigh bone and part of one of the ribs—he set a practical example of how this lamentable want was to be supplied in Ireland.

Our attention has recently been recalled to the subject by reading in the French papers a long account of a fortunate discovery recently made in France, which is considered by the *Univers* of so much importance that it devoted upwards of two columns on the 30th March last to recording the full details of it. We beg particularly to call the attention of the Most Rev. Dr. Dixon to the subject, as we suppose such matters cannot fail to be peculiarly interesting to him.

It appears that a certain Mons. Michel Le Nobletz, who was in his lifetime a priest and missionary in Lower Britanny, died on the 5th May, 1652, something more than 200 years ago, and was buried in the church of Lochrist. He had undergone, it appears, very bad treatment, and had been even interdicted and expelled from the diocese of Quimper by ecclesiastical authority, but was revered by the people as a saint, to whom they gave a kind of public worship after his death, and erected a chapel under the name of St. Michel in the town of Conquet, where he died after "three agonies, in which, in compliance with his pious desires and fervent prayers, he suffered all the torments of martyrdom, and (the writer adds, we think somewhat profanely) the *pains of a real crucifixion!*"<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Another number of the *Univers* gives us a further account of his history, which may account for the estimation in which he was held by the common people. He abandoned his friends, who considered him as a madman (on le regardait comme un fou), lived in a narrow cell, where he practised all the austerities of the ancient hermits of the desert, abstained from the luxury of linen, wore a hair shirt, slept on straw, totally abstained from the use of wine, lived on one meal a day of the coarsest bread and broth, which he prepared for himself, and gave out that he had been favoured with several visits from the Blessed Virgin, and yet "died after a long illness, in terrible agony, when all the demons were unchained against him, but could not tire out his patience, or conquer his courage." He was educated in the Jesuit College at Agen, and was succeeded by a member of the "Compagnie de Jesus." We suppose the next act in the drama will be an attempt to discover miraculous cures wrought at his tomb, which will be followed, in a century or two more, by his canonization.

On the 5th Dec., 1855, by authority of the Bishop, a number of parochial clergy, in the presence of the Mayors of Conquet and Lochrist, a physician, provincial architect, and several other witnesses, opened the tomb, and in a painful state of excitement, between hope and fear (*position pénible entre le doute et l'espérance*), to their great joy found a kind of mummy cased in lead (of which the proces-verbal gives the accurate measurement in centimetres), on which was engraved an inscription verifying the remains as those of *Michel le Nobletz*, who died May, 1652, adding that in the year 1701 a certain Bishop and Count of Leon had caused the bones to be taken from the place where they had originally been interred, and caused them to be placed in this leaden coffin (cercueil), everything having been done conformably to the directions of the congregation of rites.

We think we shall but do justice to this *important* event by giving the rest of the narrative in the very words of the proces-verbal, as recorded in the *Univers* :—

"After having examined the exterior of the case, which fully assured us that we had the coffin of Nobletz, we had the most lively anxiety to know what it contained; for that was the object, the capital point, of our mission, and the epitaph had already announced to us that we could not calculate on finding either an entire body or even a great portion of the body, since it was not till at the end of 49 years that the most reverend prelate had extracted the bones from the place where they had been interred, and where, without doubt, the humidity of the soil in the neighbourhood of the sea had produced great ravages; still there remained that sanctity which often preserves bodies . . . . ."

We suppose the pious narrators did not think it judicious or necessary to complete the sentence, and preferred leaving it to the imagination of their readers, especially as the sanctity of the body turned out to be ineffectual in the present instance to preserve it from the natural effects of moisture and decay.

"We were a prey to new uneasiness, and prayed in silence, perhaps to Michel le Nobletz himself (peut-être même à Michel le Nobletz), that we might be allowed to re-find *something* of that which was the tabernacle of an angel on the earth.

"The case was opened, and *our prayers were answered*. We happily found the pious relics which we had just been seeking with so much earnestness. We count them; we register them here with a holy respect. Behold the *infinitely precious detail*<sup>b</sup> :—

- "1. One fragment of the lower jaw bone.
- "2. One radius and one cubitus of the right arm.
- "3. One radius and one cubitus of the left arm.
- "4. One shoulder blade of the said left arm.
- "5. One fragment of the pelvis ("l'os du bassin").
- "6. Fragments of the two thigh-bones.
- "7. Two shin-bones.

"8. About a kilogramme<sup>c</sup> of black and brown matter, mixed with little bones and the remains of the intestines and flesh (d'entrailles et de chairs), reduced to dust.

"Lastly, the remains of some extremely fine white linen, now of a yellow colour, which had served to keep these relics together.

"Behold these blessed bones which God has left us for his glory and our salvation (salut) . . . . Nobletz, from the depth of his tomb, blesses still the descendants of them whom he blessed in former times.

"The holy and precious relics have been replaced with care in their case of lead, which has been sealed anew and deposited in the chapel of St. Michel at Conquet, preparatory to being replaced at a future time in its ancient tomb, when the parish church in the town shall have been built for the greater benefit of the faithful. Then, also, since the saint has made a sort of apparition in the midst of the living, they will celebrate a new funeral (on lui fera de nouvelles funérailles), more splendid than that of 1652, though by the report of its historians it was then a magnificent one. In testimony of which we have affixed our signature with those of the witnesses to the proces-verbal at Conquet, the day, month, and year aforesaid.

"D. Miorcèc de Kerdanet, Secrétaire."

Such is the account (much abridged) of this important event, as given by the leading Roman Catholic journal of France, *L'Univers*. We think we need scarcely trouble our readers with any comment on it. We hope the time is yet far off when such *pious* (?) disinterments of dead bodies would be tolerated by the good taste of

<sup>b</sup> "En voici le détail, infinitélement précis."—*Univers*, 3rd Mar., 1856.

<sup>c</sup> About two pounds weight.

Irish Roman Catholics, and that the bones and dust of our ancestors will be allowed to "rest in peace," and funeral ceremonies be reserved for the decent interment of those whom God has taken from us in our own times, without profaning them by repetition, after a lapse of two centuries, over such sad fragments of poor mortality as may have been left undecomposed by time or the humidity of the soil in which they were originally buried.

Do Roman Catholic priests really venture to assert that *bones* become *more holy* by decomposition, and that a kilogramme of fetid black and brown matter, the remains of the flesh and entrails reduced to dust, can make the remaining bones more "*precious*" than they were the day they were first buried?

If not, we should think it a decided improvement when the Most Rev. Dr. Dixon shall, at some (we hope still distant) period, depart "in the odour of sanctity," that his *entire* skeleton should be at once placed in a crystal shrine, and exhibited to the faithful, while there remains a living memory of his virtues and his talents, rather than that his remains should be exposed to the risk of total decomposition, and left to run their chance of the piety or curiosity of posterity taking it into their heads some hundreds of years hence to hunt for and disinter them!

IN another column we have briefly noticed an article in the *Univers* of 25th April last, from which it appears that the Bishop of Gap (a diocese adjoining that of Grenoble, in France) has been exerting himself to bring into notice the pilgrimage of *Our Lady of Laus*, where it is said that in the 17th century a shepherdess of the Alps often received visits from the Holy Virgin! which the worthy bishop naturally thinks quite as deserving of the attention of the faithful as the single visit to La Salette in 1846; especially as he cannot fail to recollect the escapade of Mademoiselle Lamerliere at this very place, *Notre Dame du Laus*, on the 25th Sept., six days after the apparition, of which our readers will find a full description in our fourth volume, p. 76.<sup>a</sup>

We have since read a pastoral letter from the selfsame Bishop of Gap, in which he announces to the faithful that the first anniversary of the *Coronation* of Our Lady of Laus is about to take place on the 23rd inst. We have already stated that Pope Pius IX., in the course of last year, presented a crown of gold to the statue of the Blessed Virgin at Laus, and that the ceremony of coronation was performed in that little valley by eight bishops and nearly a thousand priests, on 23rd May, 1855.

This pastoral letter calls the coronation "a never to be forgotten event" ("a tout jamais immortelle"), and assures those to whom it is addressed that the good Bishop has endeavoured to render the coming anniversary as brilliant as

<sup>a</sup> What would this be but to hold that there is a purgatory of bones as well as of souls?

<sup>b</sup> While all these things were taking place apart from Mme. Lamerliere, the Lady of La Salette took the road to *Notre Dame du Laus* (diocese of Gap), and arrived there on the 25th September. She was welcomed by the nuns who manage the establishment appropriated to pilgrims, and was lodged in a chamber on the ground floor. She did not wish to have anything to do with the persons whose piety had attracted them to Laus; her *dignity* would not permit it! This language astonished the good and humble nuns, and they manifested their surprise. "I am here," said the stranger, "to pursue the mission which I commenced at La Salette; Mother of God, I come to bring you news of heaven." More and more surprised, the nuns went to impart to their superior the language which had struck them so much, and, when they returned together, they found the stranger clad in an emblematical robe, with *cross pincers*, and hammer, nothing wanting; they heard her repeating the same language, and the moment they set about making some observations on her, the Lady of La Salette made her escape from them through the window, and took a rapid flight over the side of the mountain, with her aerial costume.

"They hastened to give information on the subject to the Bishop of Gap; but while he sends to Laus to obtain such exact information as would enable him to act, they came to tell him, that a strange lady, clothed in a white costume, with flowers and emblems of the passion of our Lord, had presented herself as the Mother of God in a hotel at Gap. Mgr. Deperry at once took on himself the duty of putting a stop to these pious freaks; the lady, however, by departing precipitately, relieved him of this trouble."